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By Mr. T O W N,

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Cælebs quid agam?

HOR.

To Mr. T O W N.

S I R!

April 5, 1756.



O man is a sincerer friend to innocent pleafantry, or more defirous of promoting it, than myfelf. Raillery of every kind, provided it be confined within due bounds, is in my opinion an excellent ingredient in converfation; and I am never difpleafed if I can contribute to the harmlefs mirth of the company, by being myfelf the fubject of it; but in good truth, I have neither a fortune, a conftitution, nor a temper that will enable me to chuckle and flake my fides, while I fuffer more from the feftivity of my friends, than the fpleen or malice of my enemies could poffibly inflict upon me: nor do I fee any reafon why

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I fhould

I should so far move the mirthful indignation of the ladies, as to be teized and worried to death in mere sport, for no earthly reason, but that I am what the world calls, an Old Bachelor.

THE female part of my acquaintance entertain an odd opinion, that a Bachelor is not in fact a rational creature, at least that he has not the sense of feeling in common with the rest of mankind; that a Bachelor may be beat like a stock-fish, that you may thrust pins into his legs, and wring him by the nose; in short that you cannot take too many liberties with a Bachelor. I am at a loss to conceive on what foundation these romping philosophers have grounded their hypothesis, though at the same time I am a melancholy proof of it's existence, as well as of it's absurdity.

A FRIEND of mine whom I frequently visit, has a wife and three daughters, the youngest of which has persecuted me these ten years. These ingenious young ladies have not only found out the sole end and purpose of my being themselves, but have likewise communicated their discovery to all the girls in the neighbourhood. So that if they happen at any time to be apprized of my coming (which I take all possible care to prevent) they immediately dispatch half a dozen cards to their faithful allies, to beg the favour of their company to drink coffee, and *help tease* Mr. Ironside. Upon these occasions, my entry into the room is sometimes obstructed by a cord fastened across the bottom of the door-case, which as I am a little near-fighted, I seldom discover till it has brought me upon my knees before them. While I am employed in brushing the dust from my black rollers, or chafing my broken shins, my wig is suddenly conveyed
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away, and either stuffed behind the looking-glass, or tossed from one to the other so dextrously and with such velocity, that after many a fruitless attempt to recover it, I am obliged to sit down bare-headed, to the great diversion of the spectators. The last time I found myself in these distressful circumstances, the eldest girl, a sprightly mischievous jade, stepped briskly up to me, and promised to restore my wig, if I would play her a tune on a small flute she held in her hand. I instantly applied it to my lips, and blowing lustily into it, to my inconceivable surprise, was immediately choked and blinded with a cloud of soot that issued from every hole in the instrument. The younger part of the company declared I had not executed the conditions, and refused to surrender my wig; but the father who had a rough kind of facetiousness about him, insisted on it's being delivered up, and protested that he never knew the *Black Joke* better performed in his life.

I AM naturally a quiet inoffensive animal, and not easily ruffled, yet I shall never submit to these indignities with patience, 'till I am satisfied I deserve them. Even the old maids of my acquaintance, who one would think might have a fellow-feeling for a brother in distress, conspire with their nieces to harass and torment me. And it is not many nights since Miss *Diana Grizzle* utterly spoiled the only superfine suit I have in the world, by pinning the skirts of it together with a red-hot poker. I own my resentment of this injury was so strong, that I determined to punish it by kissing the offender, which in cool blood I should never have attempted. The satisfaction however which I obtained by this imprudent revenge, was much like what a man of honour feels on finding himself

self run through the body by the scoundrel who had offended him. My upper lip was transfix'd with a large corkin pin, which in the scuffle she had convey'd into her mouth, and I doubt not that I shall carry the *memorem labris natam* from an old maid to the grave with me.

THESE misfortunes, or others of the same kind, I encounter daily; but at these seasons of the year which give a sanction to this kind of practical wit, and when every man thinks he has a right to entertain himself at his friend's expence, I live in hourly apprehensions of more mortifying adventures. No miserable dunghill-cock, devoted a victim to the wanton cruelty of the mob, would be more terrified at the approach of a *Shrove-Tuesday*, were he endued with human reason and forecast, than I am at the approach of a merry *Christmas* or the First of *April*. No longer ago than last *Thursday*, which was the latter of these festivals, I was pestered with mortifying presents from the ladies; obliged to pay the carriage of half a dozen oyster-barrels stuffed with brick-bats, and ten packets by the post containing nothing but old news-papers. But what vexed me the most was the being sent fifty miles out of town on that day by a counterfeit express from a dying relation.

I COULD not help reflecting with a sigh, on the resemblance between the imaginary grievance of poor *Tom* in the tragedy of *Lear*, and those which I really experienced. I, like him, was led through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire; and though knives were not laid under my pillow, minced horse-hair was strewed upon my sheets; like him I was made to ride on a hard trotting horse, through the most dangerous ways, and found at the end of my journey, that I had only been courting my own shadow.

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As much a sufferer as I am by the behaviour of the women in general, I must not forget to remark, that the pertness and sauciness of an old maid, is particularly offensive to me. I cannot help thinking that the virginity of these ancient misses, is at least as ridiculous as my own celibacy. If I am to be condemned for having never made an offer, they are as much to blame for having never accepted one. If I am to be derided for having never married, who never attempted to make a conquest; they are more properly the objects of derision, who are still unmarried after having made so many. Numberless are the proposals they have rejected according to their own account; and they are eternally boasting of the havock they have formerly made among the knights, baronets, and squires, at *Bath*, *Tunbridge* and *Epsom*; while a tattered madrigal perhaps, a snip of hair, or the portrait of a cherry-cheeked gentleman in a milk-white periwig, are the only remaining proofs of those beauties which are now withered like the short-lived rose, and have only left the virgin thorn remaining.

BELIEVE me, Mr. TOWN, I am almost afraid to trust you with the publication of this epistle; the ladies whom I last mentioned will be so exasperated on reading it, that I must expect no quarter at their hands for the future, since they are generally as little inclined to forgiveness in their old age, as they were to pity and compassion in their youth. One expedient however is left me, and which, if put in execution, will effectually screen me from their resentment.

I SHALL be happy therefore, if by your means I may be permitted to inform the ladies, that as fusty an animal as they think me, it is not impossible but by a little gentler

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treatment

treatment than I have hitherto met with, I may be humanized into a husband. As an inducement to them to relieve me from my present uneasy circumstances, you may assure them I am rendered so exceeding tractable by the very severe discipline I have undergone, that they may mould and fashion me to their minds with ease; and consequently that by marrying me, a woman will save herself all that trouble which a wife of any spirit is obliged to take with an unruly husband, who is absurd enough to expect from her a strict performance of the marriage vow, even in the very minute article of obedience: that so far from contradicting a lady, I shall be mighty well satisfied if she contents herself with contradicting me: that if I happen at any time inadvertently to thwart her inclinations, I shall think myself rightly served if she boxes my ears, spits in my face, or treads upon my corns. That if I approach her lips when she is not in a kissing humour, I shall expect she will bite me by the nose; or if I take her by the hand at an improper season, that she will instantly begin to pinch, scratch, and claw, and apply her fingers to those purposes which they were certainly intended by nature to fulfil. Add to these accomplishments, so requisite to make the married state happy, that I am not much turned of fifty, can tie on my cravat, fasten a button, or mend a hole in my stocking without any assistance.

I am,

S I R,

Your very humble Servant

CHRISTOPHER IRONSIDE.